Executive Summary

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to achieving meaningful use. AT&T Healthcare Community Online, consulting services and storage solutions offer a flexible, scalable and secure platform that helps eligible providers (EPs), eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs) meet meaningful use guidelines.
Meaningful use requires eligible providers (EPs), eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals (CAHs) to utilize information technology to improve health outcomes and reduce disparities by improving the quality, safety and efficiency of the healthcare delivery system. The guidelines also call for EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs to engage patients and families in their healthcare, improve care coordination, and ensure adequate privacy and security protections for personal health information.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) use a range of monetary incentives to foster the timely adoption of the core objects for meaningful use. Those who do not become meaningful users could face Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement penalties.

According to the results from the 21st Annual Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) Leadership Survey, healthcare leaders do understand the urgency of implementing health information technology (HIT). More than 40 percent of respondents rank meeting meaningful use criteria as their top priority for the next two years, and nearly half, 49 percent, cite meaningful use as the number one driver for an increase in their IT spending in 2010.

Healthcare organizations that lack implementation experience might find selecting, deploying, configuring and connecting an array of clinical and financial systems to achieve meaningful use costly and complex. AT&T suite of offerings enables healthcare organizations to deploy certified meaningful use applications in a timely manner with minimal disruption to EPs, eligible hospitals or CAHs.

AT&T offers a flexible, scalable, secure and powerful cloud-based platform that gives clinicians, eligible hospitals and CAHs access to the best-of-breed solutions for electronic health records (EHRs), e-prescribing, remote diagnosis and other critical systems that satisfy the core objectives of the meaningful use requirement within the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act. The HITECH Act was enacted as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

AT&T Healthcare Community Online (HCO), a single-sign-on platform, enables users to utilize their existing EMR systems or, alternatively, EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs can choose from a list of pre-integrated, certified EHR vendor offerings to easily and securely exchange patient data. AT&T has a variety of consulting services and healthcare software-as-a-service offerings to personalize how each organization adopts, uses and implements the core objectives of meaningful use.

**Understanding Meaningful Use**

Recently, the U.S. government, as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, earmarked nearly $27 billion in stimulus dollars to be spent over 10 years on healthcare IT. The intricacies of meaningful use incentives as laid out in July by the CMS, coupled with the timelines for implementation, are cause for pause, as they are overwhelming and multifaceted.

The CMS’ final rule outlines standards that apply directly to the environment and patient pool of EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs. Once EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs have identified the standards that correspond to them, they can deploy technologies to meet the objectives of meaningful use while maintaining their professional autonomy. (For details of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ final rule, see related article, page 220-231.)

**Becoming a Meaningful User**

In addition to the core meaningful use requirements, eligible providers, eligible hospitals and critical access hospitals can choose five of these menu items:

- Implement drug formulary checks.
- Incorporate clinical laboratory test results into EHRs as structured data.
- Generate lists of patients by specific conditions to use for quality improvement, reduction of disparities, research or outreach.
- Use EHR technology to identify patient-specific education resources and provide those to the patient as appropriate.
- Perform medication reconciliation between care settings.
- Provide a summary of care record for patients referred or transitioned to another provider or setting.
- Submit e-immunization data to immunization registries or immunization systems.
- Submit electronic syndromic surveillance data to public health agencies.
- Send reminders to patients for preventive or follow-up care.
- Provide patients with timely, e-access to their health information.

**Eligible hospitals and CAHs also can choose to do the following:**

- Record advance directives for patients 65 years of age or older.
- Submit electronic data on reportable laboratory results to public health agencies.

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services final rule document, “Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Electronic Health Record Incentive Program,” CMS-0033-F.

For instance, the final rule calls for clinicians, eligible hospitals and CAHs to implement a certified EHR system. An EHR is a longitudinal electronic record of patient health information generated by one or more encounters in any care delivery setting, which includes patient demographics, progress notes, problems, medications, vital signs, past medical history, immunizations, laboratory data and radiology reports. An EHR system enables clinicians, eligible hospitals and CAHs to submit compliance reports with clinical quality measures and other measures as needed to qualify for meaningful use.

One of the primary objectives of the HITECH Act is to ensure that EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs are fully utilizing EHR technology to improve patient outcomes, reduce errors, and streamline workflow processes.

Policy makers hope that incentives from CMS in conjunction with timeframes for implementation and penalties for not meeting implementation deadlines will create enough balance to reinforce the adoption of technology applications that would improve healthcare decision making. Legislators, healthcare researchers and clinicians have argued that improving the quality of healthcare requires applying integrated solutions that use clinical logic to positively impact the quality of patient care.
To ensure meaningful use objectives are being implemented consistently and accurately, the government is requiring that all EHR technology be tested and certified in accordance with the certification program established by the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology.

There is some flexibility as to how meaningful use technology is implemented. For instance, providers can personalize options for their practice environment and population being treated by selecting menu items such as drug formulary checks, integrated clinical lab results with EHRs, patient reminders, patient-specific health education resources, and use of systems that support the patient from multiple care settings.

Sifting through the meaningful use legislation is undoubtedly overwhelming, and knowing what applies to you can be challenging. If you take the complexity of the legislation and map it to the timeline for starting to report compliance, it seems to be an insurmountable task.

Yet forgoing meaningful use is not the answer. Noncompliance will result in penalties such as a drop in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. For some EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs, that could add up to significant financial losses. For others, noncompliance will make them less competitive and the impact could be far-reaching.

Implementing Meaningful Use Applications that Are Certified, Timely and within Budget

It cannot be overstated that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to meaningful use implementations. You need a framework that best reflects your patient demographic pool, budget and implementation goals. At AT&T, we want to help you become a meaningful user with solutions that tie together best-of-breed, certified solutions for EHR, e-prescribing, remote diagnosis and other critical systems while enabling you to personalize the meaningful use core objectives.

AT&T Healthcare Community Online solution is a secure, single-sign-on, cloud-based platform that enables you to select the most appropriate clinical systems, including EHR, for your office or hospital setting. All applications are pre-certified and coded to work together so the exchange of information is securely and efficiently carried out among systems.

For example, hospitals will be able to adopt or integrate existing EHR systems from Cerner, Eclipsys, Epic Systems, McKesson and Siemens. The AT&T solution also supports ambulatory EHR programs from Allscripts, Aprima, athenahealth, eClinicalWorks, Eclipsys, e-MDs, Epic Systems, GE Healthcare, Greenway Medical, McKesson, Pulse and Sage Software.

In addition, EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs can call upon AT&T for knowledge about the latest updates and changes to meaningful use. Our consultative services help navigate how meaningful use applies to organizations and identify certified vendors that assist in becoming meaningful users.

Underlying the Healthcare Community Online is our high-speed network infrastructure, which includes seamless mobility and connectivity as well as best-of-class security. In addition, healthcare clinicians will be able to scale their environments with ease. With an aging boomer population and rising healthcare consumerism, the healthcare ecosystem is set to undergo serious changes in population demographics. To handle the evolving nature of the healthcare ecosystem, healthcare clinicians and organizations will need to be nimble, flexible and have easy-to-administer applications and solutions for the evolving healthcare environment.

For our healthcare clients, AT&T has become a trusted adviser that delivers forward-thinking, world-class infrastructure and consulting services.

There are numerous benefits to utilizing health information in clinical settings. For instance, a rural hospital faced with a unique patient case can expand its network to access the expertise of a specialist, regardless of the specialist’s locale. Using AT&T Telepresence, Virtual Care and Healthcare Community Online, multiple entities can exchange information and consult on a patient’s diagnosis and treatment in real time.

Another benefit is the capability to submit electronic syndromic surveillance data to public health agencies. With the integrated Healthcare Community Online, its ecosystem of applications and the underlying reliable infrastructure, healthcare providers will be able to submit data in accordance with the applicable law and practice as it states in the meaningful use final rules. For example: Public health agencies can determine the appropriate course of action by accessing information on health threats, health trends and other critical data in near real time.

EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs aim to use integrated health solutions like AT&T Healthcare Community Online and its certified EHR applications to provide continuity of care, including targeted patient education and patient discharge instructions.

Effecting a Positive Outcome

It is believed that the HITECH Act will foster health IT adoption, which in turn will positively impact the healthcare delivery system.

EHR and other critical applications that support medical decisions are no longer considered a luxury; they are a must have. In short, flexible, secure, integrated HIT applications and solutions will transform how healthcare stakeholders interact with the healthcare delivery system. For example, an e-based process with drug-allergy interaction checks has a statistically significant chance of reducing adverse events. Another benefit is integrated reimbursement services that shorten the time between patient visits, accounting reconciliation and payment. These are unique times in healthcare and AT&T is a knowledgeable and trusted resource with a series of cost-effective solutions and services that can make becoming a meaningful user less daunting. With solutions like Healthcare Community Online—a cloud-based platform with key certified clinical applications for the efficient and secure exchange of patient information—and reliable network infrastructure from AT&T, EPs, eligible hospitals and CAHs will have access to solutions, services and expertise that will help them achieve meaningful use compliance, qualify for reimbursements and incentives, improve workflow and, best of all, improve patient outcomes.
Understanding the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ Final Rule

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services released its final rule document, “Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Electronic Health Record Incentive Program,” which provides a list of health outcomes policy priorities and a core set of objectives to meet those priorities.

The rule specifies “the initial criteria EPs, eligible hospitals, and CAHs must meet in order to qualify for an incentive payment; calculation of the incentive payment amounts; payment adjustments under Medicare for covered professional services and inpatient hospital services provided by EPs, eligible hospitals, and CAHs failing to demonstrate meaningful use of certified EHR technology; and other participation requirements.”
Notes:


For more information contact an AT&T Representative or visit www.att.com/healthcare.